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ABSTRACT

This study examined discipline problems arising in kindergarten through eighth grade classrooms and teachers' attempts to solve them. A total of 746 students in 35 classrooms were observed by 35 teacher-education students placed in separate classrooms in southern New Jersey. During ten 50-minute observation sessions, each student directly observed and coded, based on predefined behavioral categories, the discipline problems arising in the classroom and the disciplinary techniques teachers adopted to solve them. Findings indicated that the most frequent problems were talking or whispering, being out-of-seat, fidgeting, and inattention. The problems were similar from grade to grade but varied in frequency. The teachers' techniques used to solve the discipline problems were ones that did not interrupt the flow of instruction, including verbal techniques such as "shh-shh" and "stop," repeating directions, or ignoring the disruption. The least commonly used techniques were time-out, sending students to the principal's office, or requiring extra work. (Contains 25 references.) (Author/KB)

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Discipline in K through 8th Grade Classrooms

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Abstract

Lack of discipline is a chronic problem teachers face in the classroom. The manner in which this problem is handled will determine the amount of learning that takes place. As part of their field placement, 35 teacher-education students were randomly assigned to separate K through 8th grade classrooms throughout Southern New Jersey. During ten 50-minute observation sessions, each student directly observed and coded based on predefined behavioral categories the discipline problems arising in the classroom and the disciplinary techniques teachers adopted to solve them. The most frequent problems—talking or whispering, out-of-seat, fidgeting, and inattention—were found to be similar, albeit varying in frequency from grade to grade. The techniques most often used to solve them were the ones that did not interrupt the flow of instruction.

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Discipline in K through 8th Grade Classrooms

Introduction

Since 1968, lack of discipline has many times topped the annual Gallup Poll of Public Attitudes towards Public Schools as the principal problem schools have to face (Schottle & Peltier, 1991). The adoption of appropriate discipline techniques in response to students' disruptions has become one of the main components of effective classroom management. These techniques will determine how well students learn and perform in the classroom (Buck, 1992).

However, all too often teachers are not taught how to properly manage behavioral problems (Almeida, 1995) and are unaware of the effectiveness of the discipline practices they adopt (Rosen, Taylor, O' Leary, & Sanderson, 1990). Discipline becomes for teachers a major source of anxiety and uncertainty (Almeida, 1995) with consequent stress and burnout (Schottle & Peltier, 1991). Tired and frustrated, teachers lose their capacity to nurture and care about their students (Chemlynski, 1996). This study aims at finding out, based on direct classroom observations, the discipline problems teachers most often encounter in K through 8th grade classrooms, and the disciplinary techniques they adopt to solve them.

Theoretical Background & Literature Review

Misbehavior in the classroom has been defined as any students' action that distracts from, disrupts, competes with, or threatens active learning in the classroom (McCown, Driscoll, Roop, 1996). It ranges from the benign act of dropping a pencil to serious acts of aggression.

Based on 254 narratives submitted by 137 student teachers, the three discipline problems teachers most frequently encountered in the classroom were reported to be disruption, defiance, and inattention. Disruption involved more than 50 percent of the behavior problems arising in

the classroom including talking, or any other behavior that deliberately interrupted instruction. Defiance, disrespectful behavior, and disobedience included 20 percent of the misbehavior. Inattention, being off-task, not doing the work, or out-of-seat misbehavior encompassed about 9 percent of the misbehavior. The remainder included acts of verbal and physical aggression and other miscellaneous acts such as crying, lying, cheating, stealing, or gum chewing. They, respectively, accounted for 4 and 5 percent of all the incidents of misbehavior (Tulley & Chiu, 1995).

Discipline problems have been explained by students' frustration and lack of opportunity to satisfy some basic needs within the confines of the classroom. These needs include survival, power, fun and freedom (Glasser, 1986), and the need to belong (Dreikurs, 1968). Students will feel pleasure when these needs are met, and frustration when they are not. However, schools rarely empower students to satisfy their needs and rarely create the proper conditions to meet them. As a result, students will rarely work to their potential and will misbehave while adopting mistaken attitudes, goals, and behaviors (Glasser, 1986; Dreikurs, 1968). Some of the mistaken goals that have been mentioned are power, revenge, and attention seeking, fear of failure, displaying inadequacy, giving up trying to meet academic and social expectations, and low self-esteem (Buck, 1992; Dreikurs, 1968).

In an attempt to explain why students misbehave, Gartell (1995) differentiates misbehavior from mistaken behavior. Misbehavior implies that the student has intentionally done something wrong and must be punished. In contrast, mistaken behavior merely implies that the student is making mistakes while learning or committing errors of judgment as to the proper way of behaving. Up to 8 years of age, students are learning to overcome their natural tendency toward egocentrism while acquiring the advanced skill of taking others' perspective (Schickedanz,

1994). They may also engage in mistaken behavior while developing social skills. Students oftentimes lack confidence, self-esteem, and are unable to handle problems on their own. In this context, mistaken behavior is greatly influenced by the acceptance of significant others, and more specifically by that of peers (Dreikurs, 1968; Gartrell, 1995). Autonomous exploring of the surroundings and harmless experimentation may also result in mistaken behavior (Gartrell, 1995a).

Traditionally, discipline problems arising within the confines of the classroom were resolved by reactive methods which punished the misbehaving student for unacceptable behavior (Gettinger, 1988). Punishment included public criticism, verbal reprimands, threats, embarrassment, paddling, and suspension or expulsion of the misbehaving child (Gartrell, 1995; Johnson, 1994). The negative effects of public shaming and embarrassment in response to classroom misbehavior often resulted in the internalization of negative moral labels such as "mean", "bad", or "crazy". The misbehaving students lost trust in their teachers and by misbehaving reflected back the labels that had been placed on them (Gartrell, 1995).

Since 1970, the management of discipline problems no longer focused on punishment and punitive retribution, but on conflict resolution and guidance (Gartrell, 1995b). This new orientation aims at establishing a positive learning environment created and maintained by nurturing professionals, the teachers, who use positive approaches for intervention. Some of these approaches include formulating proactive rules to govern conduct (McGinnis, Frederick, & Edwards, 1995), behavior management techniques, and a balance of prevention and intervention strategies (Buck, 1992). In this manner, the misbehaving students are provided with acceptable alternatives to undesirable behavior. They are coached and helped to turn inappropriate behavior into an opportunity for learning (Buck, 1992; Gartrell, 1995). In

summary, rather than hurting or punishing, discipline within this framework means teaching misbehaving students to learn from their mistakes (Chemlynoski, 1996, Redl & Wattenberg, 1959).

A study of the characteristics differentiating effective and ineffective teachers indicated no significant differences in the way these teachers reacted to misbehavior (Emmer, Evertson & Anderson, 1980; Gettinger, 1988). However, significant differences were found in the proactive actions these two groups of teachers engaged in. Effective teachers managed their classrooms well by establishing rules and procedures from the beginning of the school year.

Classroom rules have become an important component of effective discipline. Rules must be formulated from the first day of school so that students can learn what is expected of them (McGinnis, Frederick, & Edwards, 1995). Rules should be several times explained and reminded to the students, especially during the first few weeks of school, until they are fully understood and learned (Brophy, 1983; Emmer, Evertson, & Anderson, 1980; McGinnis et al., 1995).

Classroom rules should also be few in number. Five to seven clear, simple, specific and positively formulated rules can convey to the students exactly how they should behave. Positively stated rules such as, "Please keep your eyes on your own papers" have a better effect on discipline than negatively stated ones such as, "Do not cheat". The way rules are presented is also of great importance. Rules must be taught in a lesson format and displayed in a highly visible and prominent location (Ringer, Doerr, Hollenshead & Wills, 1993; McGinnis, Frederick, & Edwards, 1995; McKee & Witt, 1989).

Furthermore, classroom rules are more likely to be followed when students participate in their formulation, are able to relate to them, and the reasons for their existence are explained to

the students (McGinnis et al., 1995). Finally, rules should be consistently enforced throughout the school by the teachers, staff, and the principal (Avellar, 1994; McKee & Witt, 1990).

A set of rules, known as *Five C's* (Almeida, 1995), has been proposed as an effective way to manage students' behavior. The first C stands for *clarity* which refers to students' clear understanding of what is acceptable and what is unacceptable behavior in the classroom. The second C stands for providing *consequences* for unacceptable behavior. The third C stands for *consistency* in bestowing rewards and punishments. The fourth C stands for *caring*. Teachers have to understand that children act in certain ways because they are children. Getting angry at or punishing the students does not make too much sense. Finally, the 5th C stands for *change*. Change may be necessary to create an effective learning environment.

Nevertheless, rules alone will not stop misbehavior. Rules need to be integrated within a behavioral management program (McGinnis et al., 1995) and upheld within a positive classroom atmosphere. Teachers who care about their students create a warm classroom atmosphere in which learning is maximized and misbehavior minimized (Borich, 1994). Novice teachers have often to struggle to create such an environment while simultaneously playing the role of disciplinarian (Johnson, 1994).

Learning when to intervene becomes a crucial component of classroom management. Although taking no action cannot improve students' behavior (Tulley & Chiu,1995), teachers are nevertheless cautioned that any intervention may be perceived as punishment unless it is handled positively (Leriche & Cowan, 1992). Students listen carefully when one of their peers is being disciplined and form their opinions about this peer based upon the teacher's reaction to the situation. Based on this reaction, the misbehaving student will acquire a high or low status in the classroom. Therefore, when teachers choose a method of discipline they must consider

its effectiveness not only on the misbehaving student, but on the classroom's response to the situation as well (Schickkedanz, 1994). Gartrell (1995b) proposes five steps to proper intervention without punishment. Teachers need to (1) be realistic and understand that everyone makes mistakes, (2) tailor activities and relate them to the students, (3) develop proactive and positive relations with the students, (4) provide solutions, and (5) involve the cooperation of the parents. Depending on the discipline problem exhibited, teachers will have to concentrate on one or more of these steps.

Despite the formulation and implementation of proactive rules, it would be unrealistic to expect a classroom free of misbehavior. Teachers have, therefore, to be prepared to deal effectively with acts of disruption, defiance, and inattention. Based on student-teachers' narratives, the most effective strategy to change these behaviors was positive reinforcement. Praise, approval and/or reward and planned ignoring were reported to have a 92 percent success rate when used to solve disruption problems (Tulley & Chiu, 1995). Students learned to behave appropriately in the classroom when misbehavior was ignored and positive behavior praised. This strategy worked especially well in the lower elementary grades where students are still learning how to act in a classroom (Ringer, Doerr, Hollenshead, & Wills, 1993).

Ignoring students' misbehavior was found to be very effective with students who acted out attention-getting behaviors. Another effective strategy to terminate inappropriate behavior was to ask the misbehaving student to participate in the intervention. It allowed him or her to receive the attention he or she was craving for when misbehaving, but this time for appropriate behavior (Ringer et al., 1993).

Explanation came next and achieved a 78 percent success rate. It was very effective with acts of aggression and was at least 50 percent of the time effective with acts of disruption and

defiance (Tulley & Chiu, 1995). Finally, change of strategy such as lowering or raising voice, pausing, and moving closer to the student was found to have a 65 percent success rate. It was very effective with inattention problems and was effective at least 50 percent of the time with acts of defiance (Tulley & Chiu, 1995). Another research study showed that 40 percent of classroom disruptions could be controlled by effective use of body language, invasion of body space, moving closer to a student and knowing when to touch a student, saying nothing or using a non-response, and lecturing in front of the class and in the aisles (Grubaugh, 1989).

Punishment type-2 which includes taking away privileges, detention, and isolation had a 53 percent success rate. This strategy worked best with acts of defiance and aggression. The use of time-out, or removing a difficult-to-control child to avoid reinforcement of inappropriate behavior, is no longer recommended since it could cause embarrassment of the misbehaving child who is being singled out. Other ineffective behavioral strategies included threats, warnings, and taking no action which had respectively 27, 14, and 20 percent success rate (Tulley & Chiu, 1995). Corporal punishment, public humiliation, and reprimand were the least desired interventions (Ringer et al., 1993).

Teachers have also been found to more often use reactive than proactive classroom management techniques. Based on a survey of kindergarten through sixth grade teachers (n=137) from two middle-class suburban school districts in Long Island, NY, the majority of the teachers reported relying on taking away privileges, reprimanding students loudly in class, and threatening to punish to curb students' misbehavior (Rosen, Taylor, O'Leary, & Sanderson, 1990). In another study by the same authors, 8 elementary school teachers from Fort Collins, Colorado were observed in their classroom. The results of this study indicated that teachers

used most often nonresponse and more often verbal than concrete responses to solve the discipline problems arising in their classroom (Rosen et al.,1990).

An examination of the methods used to obtain the data reported in this literature review indicated that direct observation of what actually happens in the classroom was rarely used as a method of data collection. The most common methods used were surveys, interviews, and self-report questionnaires by teachers or student-teachers and/or case studies. However, the data obtained through these methods run the risk of not being reliable. In their reports, teachers may embellish or distort what actually has happened in their classroom to achieve greater social desirability, or simply because of the constructive aspect of memory. Furthermore, the studies examined often obscure the difference between factual or is-statements and prescriptive or ought-statements when reporting their findings. There is no clear differentiation between (1) What discipline techniques are most often adopted and what discipline techniques ought to be adopted; and between (2) What are the most effective techniques to solve discipline problems and what techniques would be most effective to correct students' discipline problems. This study aims at obtaining more reliable data, and at resolving these ambiguities while conducting natural observations in the classrooms.

Research Questions

The research questions of this study are (1) What are the discipline problems most often encountered in K through 8th grade classrooms? and (2) What are the discipline techniques used by teachers to solve these problems in the classroom?

Methodology

Subjects

Thirty-five students enrolled in the teacher-education program of the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey were placed each in separate K through 8th grade classrooms throughout Southern New Jersey including Atlantic, Ocean, Cape May, Cumberland, Burlington, and Camden Counties. A total of 746 students participated in this study. The average number of students observed in the classroom was 21.

Table 1 displays the gender breakdown of the students observed according to their grade.

Table 1: Gender Breakdown of the Students Observed

Grades	Male	Female
K & 1 (n=8)	96	71
2 & 3 (n=9)	97	79
4 & 5 (n=7)	69	67
6,7, 8 (n=11)	137	130
Total Classes N = 35	399	347
Percent	53.49%	46.51%

As indicated in Table 1, the gender breakdown of the 746 students included in this study was 399 males and 347 females. There was an average of 53.49 percent male and 46.51 percent female students per classroom.

Table 2 displays the ethnic breakdown of the students observed.

Table 2: Ethnic Breakdown of the Students Observed

Grades	White	Black	Hispanic	Other	Total
K & 1	126	17	24	0	167
2 & 3	156	5	9	6	176
4 & 5	98	24	9	5	136
6, 7, 8	207	22	28	10	267
Total	587	68	70	21	746
Percent	78.79%	9.12%	9.38%	2.82%	100%

Table 2 shows that the majority (79%) of the students observed were Caucasians, followed by Afro-American (9%), Hispanics (9%), and others (3%) which included students from China, the Philippines, and India.

The gender breakdown of the 35 teachers observed was 6 males and 29 females; their ethnic breakdown was 31 Caucasians and 4 Afro-Americans. The number of years of teaching experience of the teachers observed ranged between 1 to 33 years and averaged to 15 years.

The gender breakdown of the 35 teacher-education students conducting the observations was 12 males and 23 females. The majority of teacher-education students were Caucasians (n=31), followed by Afro-Americans (n=2), and Hispanic (n=1).

Procedure

Within the framework of their 40-hour field placement, 35 teacher-education students were each randomly assigned to separate K through 8th grade classrooms. The distribution of the teacher-education students by grades was as follows: k and 1st grades (8), 2nd and 3rd grades (9), 4th and 5th grades (7), and 6th , 7th , and 8th grades (11). Each one of the teacher-education students sat unobtrusively in the back of the classroom he or she was assigned to and conducted ten 50-minute observation sessions on the topic of discipline. Each one of these sessions was further broken down into ten 5-minute time segments during which predetermined behavioral categories for discipline problems and disciplinary techniques adopted by teachers were coded.

The behavioral categories for students' discipline problems included: talking/whispering, fighting, inattentive, fidgeting, out-of-seat, clowning, calling out, crying, giggling/laughing, cheating, banging on objects, going out of the classroom to the nurse, to the bathroom or to drink, ignoring the teacher, tattletaling, not following directions, and teasing or taunting.

The behavioral categories for teachers' disciplinary techniques included: ignoring, nonverbal, looking, moving near, touching, verbal, light off, changing seats, repeating directions, name on the board, referring to the rules, time out, taking away privileges, extra work, private conversation, warning, head down, note home, calling parents, sending to principal, tapping on desk, clapping, snapping, and ringing bell.

Each time one of these behavioral categories was observed to occur within a 5-minute interval it was marked by a tally on a coding sheet.

Intercoder reliability was achieved by training the teacher-education students for 6 hours on videotaped transcripts about teacher-students interaction. Any behavioral category for

discipline problems or disciplinary techniques for which less than 80 percent of intercoder agreement was obtained at the last training session was discarded from the study.

The main statistics of this study amounted to computing mean frequencies and standard deviations for all behavioral categories coded during an observation session, and histograms.

Results

Students' Discipline Problems

Table 3 presents the mean frequency and the standard deviation for each behavior problem that had been observed to occur in K through 8th grade classrooms within a 50-minute observation session.

Table 3: Students' Disruptions in K through 8th Grade Classrooms

Disruptions	K and 1st *n=80		2nd and 3rd n=90		4th and 5th n=70		6th, 7th, 8th n=110	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
talk/whisper	34.86	40.84	7.48	6.32	14.77	17.54	12.8	18.39
out-of-seat	23.20	36.33	4.79	5.25	8.23	14.56	2.2	4.73
fidget	13.79	26.99	5.14	5.89	10.63	15.25	3.93	6.47
call-out	8.96	12.39	1.38	3.62	6.91	10.81	3.53	8.54
inattentive	8.86	13.31	3.83	4.38	9.17	14.44	2.45	3.12
clowning around	4.25	6.33	.69	1.12	1.30	.40	.56	1.03
fight	2.64	3.69	.16	.39	.40	.97	.15	.42
out-of-class	2.60	4.43	1.21	1.80	.02	.33	.80	1.70
giggle/laugh	2.40	3.70	.93	1.47	5.30	7.65	2.73	4.09
directions not followed	2.15	3.89	1.68	2.27	1.30	2.17	1.01	1.84
ignore teacher	1.64	2.86	1.01	1.74	1.11	2.33	.86	1.93
tattletale	1.53	2.79	1.78	1.02	.44	1.12	.00	.00
tease/taunt	.79	1.89	.18	.46	.44	1.35	.21	.68
throw items	.34	1.01	.02	.14	.13	.33	.25	.73
note passing	.19	.62	—	—	.16	.37	.11	.37
curse	.16	.43	—	—	—	—	.15	.59
food/drink	.04	.19	.06	.38	.39	.92	.86	1.93

Note 1. Mean refers to the mean frequencies per 50- minute observation session. N, the total number of observations for all the grades, equals 350. The total number of observation sessions per grade (*n), varies based on the number of teacher-education students assigned to that grade. Each student conducted ten 50-minute observations

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Table 4 shows the 4 most frequent and the 3 least frequent discipline problems occurring in K through 8th grades.

Table 4: Disruptions in K through 8th Grade Classrooms

	Most Common				Least Common		
Grades	**Talk**	**Out Seat**	**Fidget**	**Inattention**	**Throw Item**	**Food**	**Curse**
K & 1	34.86	23.20	13.79	8.86	0.34	0.04	0.16
2 & 3	7.48	4.79	5.14	3.83	0.02	0.06	0.00
4 & 5	14.77	8.23	10.63	9.17	0.13	0.39	0.00
6, 7, 8	12.18	2.20	3.93	2.45	0.25	0.86	0.15
Mean Freq.	17.32	9.61	8.37	6.08	0.19	0.34	0.08

As indicated in Tables 3 and 4, the most frequent students' disruptions observed per 50-minute session were: talking (mean=17.32), moving out of one's seat (mean=9.61), and fidgeting (mean=8.37). These disruptions were similar in K throughout 8th grade. However, the frequency of their occurrence varied from one grade to another. Inattention was also a common problem throughout the grades (mean=6.08). The least commonly occurring behavior problems were found to be cursing (mean=0.08), throwing items (mean=0.19), and eating or drinking in the classrooms (mean=0.34).

Figure 1 represents a histogram of the four most common discipline problems arising in K through 8th grade classrooms: talking, out-of-seat, fidgeting, and inattention.

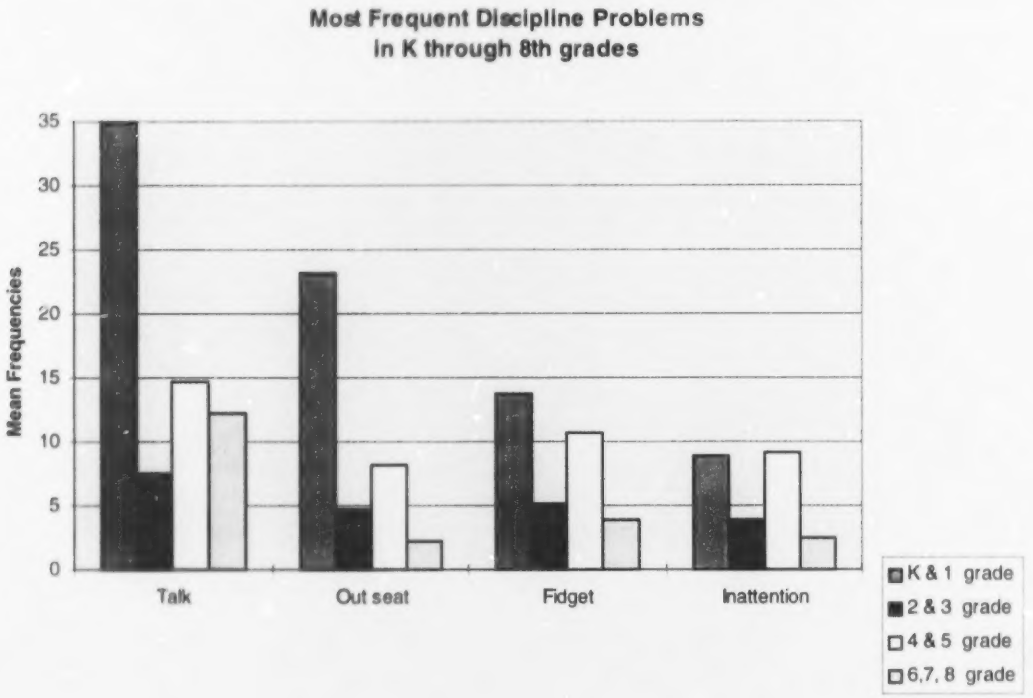

Figure 1 shows a pattern of up and down fluctuations in the frequencies of students' disruptions in K through 8th grades. These disruptions ranked the highest in the frequency of their occurrence in K and 1st grades: talking (mean=34.86), out-of-seat (mean=23.20), fidget (mean=13.79), and inattention (mean=8.86). They significantly decreased to become the lowest in the frequency of their occurrence in 2nd and 3rd grades: talking (mean=7.48), out-of-seat (mean=4.79), fidget (mean=5.14), and inattention (mean=3.83). They increased again in 4th and 5th grades: talking (mean=14.77), out-of-seat (mean=8.23), fidget (mean=10.63) and

inattention (mean =9.17) and decreased once more in 6th, 7th, and 8th grades: talking (mean=12.18), out-of-seat (mean=2.20), fidget (mean=3.93), and inattention (mean=2.45).

Teacher Disciplinary Techniques

Table 5 shows the mean frequencies of occurrence per 50-minute observation session of the disciplinary techniques used by teachers in K through 8th grade classrooms.

Table 5: Teachers' Reactions to Students' Disruptions in K through 8th Grades

Reactions	K and 1st n=80		2nd and 3rd n=90		4th and 5th n=70		6th, 7th, 8th n=110	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Verbal(shh/stop)	10.33	12.14	5.19	7.59	10.97	7.06	4.53	8.03
Repeat directions	8.75	11.69	2.63	3.47	2.73	3.45	1.41	2.10
Heads down	7.89	11.38	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ignore	6.90	15.70	2.96	3.92	3.67	5.38	1.59	3.45
Yell/threaten	6.86	9.10	.18	.68	1.06	1.54	.54	1.28
Looks at student	6.04	10.59	.69	1.14	2.20	2.30	1.58	1.79
Moves near student	4.93	17.16	.71	1.33	.58	.97	.99	2.16
Refer to rules	3.63	6.08	1.20	1.90	2.03	2.25	.50	.10
Name on board	3.51	7.85	.33	.77	.77	1.48	.15	.45
Touches student	2.36	6.26	.18	.58	.50	.93	.25	.59
Note/call to parents	1.90	4.40	.04	.26	.13	.56	.04	.19
Reprimand (public)	1.81	3.49	2.94	3.62	.44	1.12	2.05	2.87
non-verbal signal	1.21	2.07	.53	.88	.44	1.35	.65	1.01
Loss privileges	.83	2.03	.76	1.26	.20	.46	.25	.59
Warning (verbal)	.81	3.01	—	—	.40	.81	.85	1.22
Lights off	.51	12.14	.17	.41	.53	1.37	.04	.19
Reprimand (private)	.45	1.39	1.20	1.90	—	—	.54	1.28
Seating changes	.35	1.25	.38	2.15	.67	1.65	.19	.49
Assign extra work	.23	.83	.02	.15	.03	.16	.01	.10
Send to principal	.23	.66	.01	.11	.01	.12	.02	.13

Note 1. Mean refers to the mean frequencies per 50-minute observation session. N=350 observations. The total number of observation sessions conducted per grade (n*) varies depending on the number of teacher-education students assigned to that grade.

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Table 6 displays the mean frequencies of occurrence of the three most and the three least common discipline techniques teachers adopted in K through 8th grade classrooms during a 50-minute observation session.

Table 6: Mean Frequencies of some Disciplinary Strategies in K through 8th Grades

	Most common			Least common		
Strategies	**Shh/Stop**	**Repeat**	**Ignore**	**Time Out**	**Principal**	**Extra Work**
K & 1 Gr.	10.33	8.75	6.90	7.89	0.23	0.23
2& 3 Gr.	5.19	2.63	2.96	0.06	0.01	0.02
4 & 5 Gr.	10.97	2.73	3.67	0.03	0.01	0.03
6,7,8 Gr.	4.53	1.41	1.59	0.19	0.02	0.01
Mean K-8	7.76	3.88	3.78	2.04	0.07	0.07
Average deviation	2.90	2.44	1.56	2.92	0.08	0.08

As indicated in Tables 5 and 6, the most frequent disciplinary techniques adopted by teachers were verbal techniques such as shh/shh and stop (mean=7.76), and repeating directions (mean=3.88), as well as ignoring the disruption (mean=3.78). The disciplinary techniques least often used were time out (mean=2.04), assigning extra work (mean = 0.07), and sending the student to the principal (mean =0.07).

Table 7 displays the verbal and nonverbal discipline techniques most commonly used by teachers in k through 8th grade.

Table 7: Means Frequencies of the Techniques not Interrupting Instruction

	Verbal			Non verbal		
Grades	**Shh/Stop**	**Repeat**	**Ignore**	**Look**	**Move Near**	**Touch**
K & 1	10.33	8.75	6.90	6.04	4.93	2.36
2 & 3	5.19	2.63	2.96	1.14	0.71	0.18
4 & 5	10.97	2.73	3.67	2.20	0.58	0.50
6,7,8	4.53	1.41	1.59	1.58	0.99	0.25
Mean, K-8	7.76	3.88	3.78	2.74	2.00	0.83

Table 7 shows that the verbal and nonverbal disciplinary techniques most frequently used by teachers were those that did not interfere with the flow of instruction. These included shh, shh., "quiet" (mean=7.76), repeating directions (mean=3.88), ignoring the behavior (mean=3.78), looking at (mean=2.74), moving near (mean=2.0) and touching (mean = 0.83) the misbehaving students.

Figure 2 represents the histogram of the mean frequencies of the methods of discipline most frequently used by teachers in K through 8th grades within a 50-minute observation session.

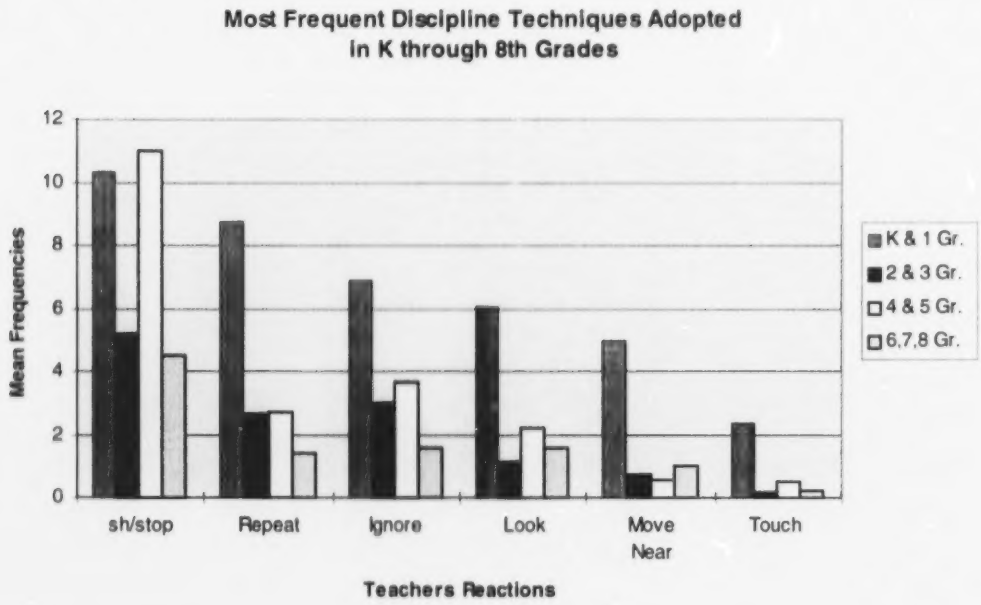

Figure 2 allows for the comparison of the use of various disciplinary techniques in the various grades. The incidence of the most common disciplinary reactions is highest in K and 1st grades: shh/stop (mean=10.33), repeating direction (mean=8.75), ignoring the behavior

(mean=6.90), looking (mean=6.04), moving near (mean=4.93), and touching (mean=2.36). These reactions drop to their lowest in 2nd and 3rd grades: shh/stop (mean = 5.19), repeating direction (mean = 2.63), ignoring the behavior (mean=2.96), looking (mean=1.14), moving near (mean=0.71), and touching (mean=0.18). These strategies rise once more in their frequency of occurrence in 4th and 5th grades: shh/stop (mean=10.97), repeating direction (mean=2.73), ignoring the behavior (mean=3.67), looking (mean=2.20), moving near (mean=0.58) and touching (mean=.50), to lower once again in 6th, 7th, and 8th grades with shh/stop (mean=4.53), repeating direction (mean=1.41), ignoring the behavior (mean=1.59), looking (mean=1.58), moving near (mean=0.99) and touching (mean=0.25). This pattern of up and down fluctuations parallels the one observed with students' disruptions in these grades.

Discussion

In conclusion, most of the discipline problems arising in K through 8th grades were disruption problems rather than severe behavior problems. These findings corroborate those of Tulley and Chiu (1995) obtained through survey and student-teachers' narratives.

The high incidence of disruptive behaviors (talking, out-of-seat, and fidgeting) in K and 1st grades may be explained by the fact that students in these grades have not yet learned what is the proper way of behaving in the classroom and what are the expectations related to their role as students. Furthermore, the large standard deviation indicates that some kindergarten classrooms and some students may have learned faster than others how to behave appropriately. Therefore, in agreement with Gartrell (1995), these students' misbehavior is mistaken behavior. The lowest incidence of disruptions in 2nd and 3rd grades indicates that students in these grades have learned many of the rules for proper classroom behavior and follow the rules. This age

pattern in following the rules is similar to other rule-governed behaviors such as grammar and morality. Around 8 or 9 years of age, rules are more strictly adhered to no matter what the rule-governed behavior is. The increase in the frequency of disruption in 4th and 5th grades may reflect a spurt in autonomy and rebellion. However, the reduced but continuing occurrence of the same disruptions in 6^{th}, 7^{th}, 8^{th} grades such as talking and fidgeting may indicate that these disruptions reflect some basic needs that the students are unable to satisfy in the classroom.

Students' need to talk and interact with each other is supported by Vygostky's (1978) theory of cognitive development. This theory emphasizes the importance of verbal exchange and intersubjectivity during scaffolding and assisted learning. These processes refer to students' negotiation through conversation and social interaction with more capable adults and peers in order to reach an understanding and/or a solution to the problem at hand. When these processes are interfered with, students will misbehave, that is, talk to their peers.

Unfortunately, as evidenced by the most commonly used disciplinary techniques, shh, shh, shh, stop, ignoring, and repeating directions, teachers do not seem aware of their students' need to talk and interact with each other, or refuse to acknowledge this need. Teachers continue to do most of the talking in their classroom. As a consequence, the "disruptive behavior" talking is likely to occur. It may, therefore, be concluded that students need to be given the opportunity to verbally interact with each other.

Verbal and social interaction should be incorporated into teachers' instructional planning in the form of instructional conversation and cooperative group work to enhance learning. Fidgeting and out-of-seat may also reflect students' need to manipulate and interact with the environment (Piaget, 1969). Therefore, more hands-on activities would be beneficial to engage the students' bodies at the same time as they engage their tongues. Working with a peer, group

projects, cooperative learning groups, and debates would provide students with such opportunities and consequently minimize disruptive behavior.

The findings of this study also indicated that severe behavioral problems such as verbal or physical acts of aggression are not as widespread as commonly presented by the media. The students enrolled in the Southern New Jersey schools participating in this study rarely fought or cursed at each other or at the teacher during class. These findings may, however, be related to the fact that the schools observed did not include inner-city schools, where most of the violence is reportedly concentrated. Although spread over a wide geographic area, the schools observed were not in large cities. Furthermore, the large majority of the sample of students observed were Caucasians. These drawbacks may threaten the external validity of this study and prevent the generalizibility of its results to the whole population of students in K through 8 grade classrooms in the United States. Another more comprehensive study could include inner cities from various areas in the United States, suburban schools, and a sample of students more representative of the ethnic diversity in the schools.

The findings of our study concerning the disciplinary techniques most often used by teachers corresponds to those that Rosen et al. (1990) obtained through a survey technique. Teachers usually adopted disciplinary methods that do not disrupt the flow of instruction such as shh, shh, shh, stop, ignoring, and repeating directions. These methods may, however, not be too effective in solving the kind of disruption problems that do arise in the classroom. Following Almeida's (1995) 5th C rule, change may be required to increase learning. An integral part of classroom management must, therefore, include effective instructional techniques that would acknowledge students' need to verbally interact with each other and manipulate their environment. Instructional conversation and active manipulation of the

environment rather than frontal teaching could be recommended. This type of instruction has the potential of engaging students in active learning while reducing the disruptive behavior encountered in the classroom.

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